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MEASURES TO FACILITATE THE RETURN AND REINTEGRATION OF HIGHLY SKILLED MIGRANTS INTO AFRICAN COUNTRIES

1. Introduction

There is no doubt that all African countries have come to value the importance of high quality human resources in their development endeavours; Policies that have been articulated over the years in many African countries point to the growing attention being given to education and training, management development and the general development and utilization of human resources.

More important, African Governments are increasingly becoming conscious of the need to rationalize their human resources planning, development and utilization activities to avoid skill mismatches, open unemployment of the educated, underutilization or misutilization of skilled manpower and a waste of valuable resources.

In spite of the desire to achieve harmony in the way the region's human resources are being developed and utilized, there continue to emerge serious constraints which are extraneous to the human resources sectors, but which impact negatively on efforts to create a pool of middle and high level manpower for development, and to retain within national boundries, the stock of high quality human resources that has been built up over time, and with much financial investments. The flight of skilled manpower from African economies has, in recent years reached alarming proportions, and the return rate of African students graduating from institutions of higher learning in Western Europe and North America has been quite visibly declining. This negative development affecting the supply of high level manpower in African countries is occuring at a time when Africa's socio-economic development most definitely calls for large numbers of well trained manpower. They are needed in fields such as industry, modernized agriculture, science and technology, medicine and medical research, and financial and economic management. As these sectors grow in size and importance in African countries, so also have their demands for more people with higher skill levels. Unfortunately a number of factors have intervened to render it difficult for these skill needs to be met satisfactorily. Chief among these is the inability of most African countries to attract and retain their skilled manpower. A very large number of skilled Africans are found to be operating in the developed industrialized countries of the West, at a time when their national economies are crying out for their services.

Ways must be found to return as many of these skilled Africans as possible, to the African economy, and although the onus is on African countries themselves to evolve the right policy measures to facilitiate the return of skilled African nationals, host countries in the west, and the international community at large also have an important role to play.

In this paper, a brief review will be made of the social and economic context within which human resources difficulties and the resultant flight of skills must be interpreted; the cumulative effects of these trends on outmigration will next be assessed; and finally, measures for the return and retention of highly skilled Africans from Western Europe and America, will be proposed.

2. Socio-economic Conditions in Africa and their impact on the utilization of Human Resources[1]

After some two decades of development planning, African countries began to realize that their development strategies might bring about growth, but not necessarily socio-economic development. Serious imbalances had emerged in African economies, which had created huge income gaps, rural/urban disparties, the disfunctional growth of public institutions, the marginalization of a good percentage of urban populations, and a generally low quality of life within the continent. By 1980, it had become clear that African Governments would have to modify their strategies of development in order to substantially reduce existing imbalances and embark upon new development directions which would result in raising the quality of life of their populations.

A new development strategy was charted out at the economic summit meeting of Africa's Heads of State and Government which convened at Lagos, Nigeria in 1980, and whose outcome is the now well-known Lagos Plan of Action.

The Lagos Plan of Action can be said to constitute the most fundamental appraisal of Africa's underdevelopment dilemma ever made by Africa's Heads of State and Government. It makes far-reaching policy prescriptions for a change of development directions towards efforts to strengthen Africa's socio-economic foundations and gear the continent towards self-reliant and self-sustaining development. The broad objectives of the plan are:

(a) the promotion of self-reliance and self-sustainment in growth and development;

(b) the promotion of inward-looking and autonomous processes of economic growth;

(c) a diversification and integration of the African economy;

(d) the eradication of unemployment and mass poverty and a fairer distribution of incomes and wealth;

(e) the strengthening of sub-regional and regional cooperation to overcome the effects of balkanization such as the inability of individual states to exploit their natural resources.

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[1] All data in this section are from ECA sources.

Furthermore, the Lagos Plan of Action emphasises that to achieve these objectives, all factors of production must be made to interact in such a way as to create internal interdependencies and so promote internal economic integration. Policies must be implemented with a view to developing subregional, regional and national markets into direct suppliers of factor inputs and direct consumers of goods and services, skills and knowledge must also be developed not only to provide a comprehensive understanding of the entire resource base within the region, but also, and more importantly, to be able to exploit that base for application to meaningful development endeavours. This would require the strengthening and reorientation of institutions of education and training, of planning and of finance. It would also call for the realignment of capabilities towards the production of technical, scientific, managerial and entrepreneurial skills within the continent.

(i) The Social and Economic Crisis in Africa

Even before African Governments could institute the changes required to steer their development activities there new directions, certain unfavourable internal and external conditions emerged to put all efforts in this regard off course. The African economy was affected by drought and desertification, food shortfalls, energy problems, a heavy debt burden, balance of payments difficulties and natural disasters. Some of these problems had surfaced on the African continent as far back as some fifteen years ago, but climaxed in what has been termed the African social and economic crisis, in 1984.

At the beginning of 1984, 24 African countries had their agricultural sector so decimated by drought and other adverse production conditions that they were considered "food-aid dependent", meaning that these countries lacked the capacity to produce or to import food to feed their people. Food production inefficiencies in African countries were exemplified by the sharp drop in cereals production between 1981 and 1983 resulting in a regional production shortfall of more than 3.3 million tons. By 1983, the useable area of pastoral lands had been reduced by 25 percent in the continent's arid and semi-arid regions as a result of the prolonged drought. This contributed significantly to the loss of some 20 to 30 percent of the animal herd in many African countries.

In 1983 and 1984, certain African countries suffered from floods, volcanoes and cyclones. In all, 39 out of 50 African countries experienced one form or another of natural disasters which distroyed land, crops and physical infra-structure; depleted labour from drought and disaster - prone areas and increased human and livestock pressures on arable and pastoral lands.

The international economic environment did not assist in making things any easier for African countries: Inflation, the world recession and other factors converged to depress demand for African products and led to the fall of prices of African commodities in the world market. The prices of African products in the world market in 1982 were the lowest since 1942. Between 1981 and 1983,

there was a 15 percent drop in the total value of African exports. Terms of trade deficits reached a record of 50 percent between 1977 and 1981 and by 1982, Africa's balance of payment deficits had risen to between US$13 and US$15 billion.

As a result of these unfavourable international economic conditions, African Governments resorted to certain stringency measures, including the reduction of imports of "non-essential" commodities leading to a total drop in imports of about 13 percent in 1982 and 1983. This caused strains on public investments and financing of socio-economic development projects, and drastically reduced capacity utilization in African industrial enterprises.

African Governments also resorted to commercial borrowing, partly as a result of the international economic conditions and the unfavourable terms of trade. Between 1973 and 1982 the continent's external debt increased to some US$170 billion. For certain countries total external debt represented between 40 and 60 percent of annual GDP, whereas in some others, debt servicing alone, as a percentage of total value of exports had reached 25 per cent in 1983 from a mere 8 per cent ten years earlier.

Internal structural inefficiencies further compounded the difficult African socio-economic conditions. First among these is the very nature of the African economy:

> "...the African economy is still basically underdeveloped; At the macro-economic level, the structure of production is dominated by agriculture, mainly peasant agriculture and services, which, together account for 73 per cent of the total gross domestic product of the region as a whole. The industrial base is small, fractured and only minimally linked to the region's natural resource base. The share of manufacturing in total output, mainly for export is a mere 6.6 per cent of GDP, while the generation of energy and construction contribute only 1.3 per cent structural imbalances, the African economy remains the most exposed in the world. External trade constitutes the single major stimulus to Africa's internal socio-economic progress in spite of the narrowness of export commodities and the dramatic shifts in prices and the inherent technological content of exports."[1]

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1 UNECA; ECA and Africa's Development, 1983-2008: A Preliminary Perspectives Study, Addis Ababa, 1983? p.15

African agriculture is plagued by problems of low productivity and high underemployment, caused in part by the use of rudimentary agricultural technology, a very low level of application of science and technology to production, insufficient use of fertilizers, pesticides etc. African agriculture is for the most part dependent on rainfall, thus making production, consumption and export of agricultural commodities also heavily dependant on the vagaries of the weather; Moreover, government intervention in the form of inputs such as seed, fertilizer, extension and marketing services, is provided mainly to the cash crop subsector, and ignores the food producing subsector. This has contributed to the serious food production declines, which made it necessary for African countries to spend US$5 billion in food imports in 1980.

In the field of industry, African Governments have experienced their own set of difficulties. Industrialization strategies failed to create the right internal complimentarities, or establish linkages with local agriculture, services and natural resources. As a result, industrial production activities developed a deep dependence on foreign markets for the supply of production inputs, thus making industrial productivity unnecessarily foreign-exchange dependent in most African countries. In these circumstances, industrial output was hard hit by the economic downturn, and industrial capacity utilization fell sharply. In Nigeria and Tanzania, for example, it dropped by 50 and 57 percent respectively between 1980 and 1983.

Banking, insurance, transport and communications have also not been unaffected by difficulties, chief among these, being the inability of African Governments to exert a significant degree of effective control on their operations. These are areas that are heavily dominated by foreign multinational companies, thus limiting the impact they could have on the pace and direction of development.

Internally, there exists other problems that impact negatively on socio-economic development. These manifest themselves in inefficiencies in financial, production, human resources and development management.

(ii) The Crisis and Human Resources utilization

As a result of these unfavourable socio-economic conditions in Africa, high-quality human resources have not been adequately or effectively utilized. Between 1980 and 1984, there was a sharp increase in the incidence of open unemployment which shot up by 68 per cent from 12 million to 20.1 million workers. Underemployment affected 40 per cent of the labour force in 1980, but increased from 50 million to 94.8 million workers by 1984. A good percentage of Africa's openly unemployed are young school leavers from the primary school, but increasingly a trend is being discerned in which secondary and tertiary level graduates are being affected by open unemployment for relatively long periods of time. Aggregate demand deficency accounts in large measure for

Unemployment and Underemployment in Africa, 1980-1984

	1980		1984	
	Millions	% of Labour Force	Millions	% of Labour Force
Unemployment	12	5.3	20.1	10.1
Underemployment	60	40	94.8	47.4

Source: ECA 1985

these high levels of unemployment, but skill mismatches also contribute towards worsening the situation especially in respect of "educated unemployment". The latter condition affects an estimated 3 million workers on the continent today.

Underemployment has been prevalent, more in the subsistence agricultural sector of African economies, but with the difficult economic conditions described above, it has been occuring at an increasing rate in the formal, modern sector of the economies of African countries. The public sector - Government and State-owned enterprises - suffers most from this employment condition as a result of the pursuit of certain employment policies that have resulted in overmanning, management and supervisory inefficiencies, and the inadequacy of production inputs. According to a World Bank study, as much as 40 per cent of Government employees in one African country could be laid off without affecting productivity and output levels.[1]

Salaries and other forms of remuneration have also been affected by the economic downturn. Real incomes have declined in all African countries, against the doubling in some cases the trippling of the cost of living, and the shortages of essential commodities which have pushed up prices of these commodities. In 1982, the real value of a Ghanaian doctor's monthly salary had dropped to the equivalent to US$42; in Uganda a Permanent Secretary earned the equivalent of a mere US$40 every month; whereas in Sierra Leone, a university professor receives US$60 per month today. These are the extreme cases of low remuneration to high-level manpower in Africa, but in general the average salary of the African highly skilled professional does not exceed the equivalent of US$400 per month. Yet Lagos is more expensive than London, Freetown than

1 See World Bank, World Development Report, Washington DC, 1983.

Paris, and Accra than Lisbon. This reality has had a very negative impact on efforts to maximize the utilization of middle and high-level manpower in African countries. Added to the discouraging situation with regard to earnings, is also the difficulties of attaining an appreciable level of job satisfaction in an environment where equipment, instruments and tools required for working efficiently may be totally absent or inadequate. Social, religious and political problems have also intervened to render it difficult to get the best out of Africa's high-level manpower, to attract and to retain those Africans with the requisite skills and knowledge for socio-economic development.

The following section will examine the present status of African out-imigration trends and assess the impact of socio-economic conditions on the flight of skills from African economies.

3. The Impact of Social and Economic Conditions on Migration Trends

Migration statistics for Africa as a whole are extremely scanty. With the exception of a few countries in North Africa, hardly anything exists by way of data to show the magnitude of the African out-migration problem. Apart from a few general studies on the brain drain in North Africa and a few sectoral studies, virtually nothing else exists to treat the African brain drain phenomenon. However a look at the literature on the brain drain might help give an indication of the causes and magnitude of the problem as it affects African countries.

An UNCTAD Study,[1] prepared for the fifth Session of UNCTAD in 1979 used immigration data from three major receiving countries of the West to estimate the size of the brain drain from developing to developed regions of the world. Out of an estimated total of 400,000 highly skilled immigrants from the Third World, some 27,000 came from Africa in the years between 1960 and 1975, representing only 6.9% of the total from all developing regions in that period. The total from Africa, compared with that from Asia, some 220,000 skills, may indeed look insignificant. However when placed against the stock of available skills within the continent, they appear to be really substantial: In 1975, there were approximately 150,000 high-level professionals on the African continent. Their numbers could have been increased by 18 per cent if all 27,000 skilled migrants operating in the economies of Western countries had been brought back to the continent.

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1 See United Nations Conference on Trade and Development: The Reverse Transfer of Technology: A survey of its main features, Causes and Policy implications (TD/B/C.6/47); U.N. New York 1979.

But that was ten years ago when socio-economic conditions in Africa were relatively more attractive than they are today. Although there exist no statistics for Africa correlating worsening economic conditions with rates of out-migration, there are broad indications from two ECA country studies on migration in the Sudan and in Egypt, to show, more than intuitively, that economic conditions correlate positively with out-migration rates. In the Sudan, for example, during the difficult years from 1972, out-migration rates were as follows: 1972, 545; 1973, 1,160; 1974, 2,268; 1975, 10,058.[1] The study observes that "data for 1976 and 1978 are, by far much higher, because the situation keeps on worsening"[2]. A more extreme and perhaps a-typical case is that of Zimbabwe. When the war of liberation began to peak and the effects of economic sanctions hit the Rhodesian regime, out-migration of the white business and professional class took the following patter: 1976, 7,027; 1977, 10,908; 1978, 13,703; 1979, 11,817; 1980, 10,833.[3]

Uganda lost more than half its high level professional manpower during the regime of Idi Amin when political repression, combined with gross economic mismanagement made living and working in Uganda stiffling for this class of people. In Ethiopia, the Government was obliged to mount a campaign to induce its skilled nationals in Western Europe and North America to return, when, in 1981, it was discovered that a substantial loss of middle and high-level professionals had placed severe constraints on the smooth running of the economy.

Whatever the reason might be, there is no denying the fact that the exodus of skilled manpower from African countries has picked up momentum in recent years. In certain western countries, there are to be found more African nationals in certain professions than are available in their own countries. It is reported that there are more Guinean, Algerian, Malagache and Beninois doctors and teachers working in France, than the number of technical assistance personnel in the same fields in the countries of origin of these nationals.[4] The same source reports that in 1973, out of 163 Congolese doctors, only 62 were found to be practising in the Congo. Most of the remainder were providing

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1 UNECA: A Survey on the Problems of the Brain Drain in North African Countries; Monograph on the Outflow of Qualified Specialists and Skilled Manpower: The Case of Egypt and the Sudan; Addis Ababa, December 1978.

2 Ibid.

3 Caute, David; Under the Skin: The Death of White Rhodesia; Penguin; UK; 1983; p. 29

4 Jeune Afrique, No. 65/20, June 1985, p. 55

services in Western Europe. The situation with respect to the loss of skills of this magnitude affects all African countries in varying degrees. The ECA, reporting to African Ministers of economic planning on the situation in 1985 observed that:

> "some ten years ago, when conditions on the continent were relatively more attractive than they are now, over 14,000 Africa Scientists, engineers, doctors and teachers were known to be employed in the United States of America and the United Kingdom alone. This figure would be staggering if similar data were available for professional African in France, Belgium, the Scandinavian countries, Canada and the Middle Eastern countries. It is reasonable to assume that with the deteriorating socio-economic conditions in Africa since that time, the numbers of professionals lost to the continent should have become much greater today."[1]

Several attempts have been made by Governments and internationalorganizations to quantify in dollar terms the cost of the loss of skills from Third World countries. One estimate puts it at US$50 billion between 1961 and 1972.[2] Another calculation by the Government of the United States estimated that by importing skilled manpower from developing countries, the USA saved US$883 million whereas the countries of origin of these migrants, lost at least US$320 million between 1960 and 1975.[3] These amounts represent what UNCTAD describes as the "imputed capital value of skill flows."[4] If one applies UNCTAD's imputed capital value of US$184,000 per skilled migrant, and if one assumes that there exist today some 40,000 skilled African migrants in the industrialized countries, one arrives at a staggering sum of US$7.3 billion which constitutes the net loss to African economies. In terms of the loss of these professionals' much needed contribution to the development effort in Africa, the costs are immeasurable.

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1 UNECA, "The Crisis of Unemployment and Human Resources Management" Doc E/ECA/CM.11/33, Addis Ababa, February 1985

2 See UNDP: "Effects of the Brain Drain on Human Resources Development in Africa: Prespectives for TCDC"; TCDC/AF/5, New York, 1982. See also, UNCTAD, "The Reverse Transfer of Technology: A Survey of its main Features, Causes and Policy Implications", New York 1979

3 World Bank, op;cit. p. 105

4 See UNCTAD; The Reverse Transfer of Technology, op;CIT, pp. 13-17

4. Causes of Out-migration

All indications are that migration flows from African countries are mainly directed towards the free market economies of Western Europe and North America. While the United States of America and Canada attract skilled nationals from all African countries, certain countries in Western Europe seem to be the favourites of certain African nationalities. No doubt former colonial ties have much to do with this. France is a favourite country for all African ex French colonies; Belgium for Zairois, Burundese and Rwandese, all central Africans and ex-Belgian subjects. Britain attracts English speaking African except Liberians who prefer the United States of America, because of historical ties. The Scandinavian countries are increasingly becoming a high in-migration centre for Africans because of their relatively more liberal attitude to foreigners and the greater opportunities they offer for work and study.

The oil-rich countries of North Africa and the Middle East have also served as a magnet for skilled and professional workers from certain Afro-Arab countries, by virtue of the tremendous financial and economic opportunities created by the oil-induced economic boom. Hundreds of thousands of workers have emigrated to the Gulf states and Libya, from Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Somalia and Morocco. Job prospects apart, cultural, linguistic and religious affinities make these Arab oil-producing countries an attractive in-migration centre for thousands of Afro-Arab skilled manpower.

A number of studies have been carried out on the brain drain with a view to analysing its causes and its magnitude, as well as its costs.[1] In all these studies a consensus emerges to the effect that the major cause of migration is economic and financial. When financial benefits to the individual professional are too low, resulting in hardships and an inability to meet his needs for a comfortable life, the individual concerned looks for opportunities to sell his skills elsewhere at a higher price. Because of the higher levels of development and the accompanying income differentials between developed and developing countries'economies the former are typically whose most likely to attract the attention of such individuals. Real incomes in Africa have

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1 See for example Glaser and Habers, The Brain Drain: Emigration and Return, UNITAR Research Report No.; 12; New York, Pergamon Press 1978; WHO, "Multinational study of the International Migration of Physicians and Nurses. Analytical Review of the Literature"; AMD/75.7, United Nations: "Outflow of Trained Personnel from Developed Countries", E/C.8/21; Naseem "Case Studies in Reverse Transfer of Technology (Brain Dran); a Survey of Problems and Policies in Pakistan; UNCTAD Doc. No. TD/B/C.6/AC4/4; Böhing "Migration from Developing to High Income countries" in ILO Background Papers to World Conference on Employment, Geneva, 1976.

been on the decline in the past several years. Whereas nominal values of incomes did not increase in most African countries, prices were constantly rising. In 1981, for example the average price increase on the continent was of the order of 18.9 percent over 1980. Between 1981 and 1982 prices went up again by an average of 13.6 percent; and the average increase was 12.3per cent from 1982 to 1983.[1] These price increases erode the pay package of both professional salaried workers and wage labourers. The former, however, have the option to seek employment in other markets by virtue of the international character of their skills and qualifications.

Working conditions of many professional categories also have a part to play in intensifying the push effect from African countries. As has been mentioned earlier, foreign exchange shortages in recent years have meant that difficulties have been encountered in purchasing equipment and materials required to enable industries and services to function in an efficient manner. This situation has affected the efficiency and productivity of professional and technical workers especially those engaged in engineering, industrial, scientific and medial fields. IN 1983, an ECA study in an East African country discovered that machines in one large industrial establishment were idle 42 per cent of the time as a result of breakdowns and lack of spare parts. In another country, the work of doctors in a large Government hospital was hampered by the shortage of surgical gloves. In one West African country, no funds were allocated to the national university for research activities for three years. The general absence in African countries of equipment and working tools which normally make work easy, exciting and efficient in developed countries, contributes to frustrating professionals and to inducing them to seek employment out of the region.

Other factors which are related to the working environment include conditions for job-satisfaction, promotion, and a system for recognizing and rewarding efficiency. Promotion on criteria other than merit is becoming common in Africa and the award of non-pecuniary rewards for diligence and high productivity is not often resorted to. In the management of public services, professionals are frustrated by their increasing inability to use their professional judgement in making decisions that affect the economic and social fabric, on account of what is being termed as "political interference". Consequently the feeling is rife among public servants that their role in managing development has been reduced to one of executing orders handed down by policy-makers sometimes on matters as routine as the award of building construction contracts.

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1 See UNECA: Survey of Economic and Social Conditions in Africa, 1982-1983 Addis Ababa, 1984, p. 87.

The prevailing social environment also has an effect on migration trends. These conditions may be exemplified by the state of the physical environment, the availability of certain amenities, housing conditions, transportation and schooling facilities, the availability of certain consumer items etc. In most African countries, these indicators of social conditions have registered significant declines, thus increasing hardship and placing more phychological strains on Africans. Professional workers with a choice, will sustain these levels from what would constitute for them, an oppressive environment.

The inadequacy of higher education facilities and opportunities in African countries, has been identified as a major contributor by default, to the brain drain. Studies have shown that a good percentage of African students in universities in Western Europe and North America tend not to return to the region after their graduation. Furthermore, in most cases, this form of emigration generally affects the brightest and the best qualified, leaving the countries of origin with second-rate professionals.[1] The Government of Mali complains that some 15 percent of Malans studying in France never return to Mali. The table below, gives an indication of the number of African students in Western Europe and North America as of 1977. Assuming that the Malian return rate of 85 percent is representative of the migration situation affecting Africans studying abroad, Africa has lost from 1977 to now, more than 16,000 middle and high-level skilled manpower to these developing countries.

African students in six Western countries, 1977

Country of study	Numbers
USA	29,560
France	52,096
UK	12,624
FRG	4,084
Italy	1,224
Belgium	4,997
TOTAL	104,585

Source: UNESCO Statistical Year book, 1980

Political upheavals and general instability have been identified as a strong "push" factor in international migration studies. Sometimes, this cause of out-migration has been classified along with social conditions. In Africa, it should be treated separately because of the seeming persistence of political turmoil on the continent. In the twenty-five years since

[1] See J. Bhagwati, The Brain Drain and Taxation, Theory and Empirical Analysis, Oxford, North Holland Publishing Co., 1976. See also Jeune Afrique No. 65 op,cit.

independence in Africa, there have been scores of coup d'états, cross-border conflicts, revolutions, wars, tribal strife and a host of violent occurences that spell political instability. With each new situation accompanied by its own set of purges directed at different groups of people, feelings of individual insecurity have become extremely high, making it safer for those who have the credentials to do so, to seek sanctuary in more politically stable and less repressive environments.

The foregoing treatment of the causes of out-migration from African economies suggest that the problem must be interpreted within a broader context of the social, economic and political conditions prevailing. Only after a thorough analysis of the socio-economic and political causes of the problem has been made, will it be possible to proffer solutions to mitigate the harmful effects of the brain drain on African development endeavours.

5. Measures for the Return and Reintegration of African Migrants

Africa's present social and economic conditions, as discussed earlier in this paper, are a description of a state of deep underdevelopment. Under conditions of underdevelopment, it is difficult for an individual's entire material, economic social and political needs to be met. Moreover lifestyles of the developed world are more and more being accepted as the norm of living for those who have had an exposure to these lifestyles. Professionals and other people in middle and high-level positions in African countries have been more exposed to Western European societies and have no doubt accepted ways of life in those societies as a norm to which they should aspire. They therefore expect a certain standard of living to enable them to satisfy their acquired consumption habits; they demand a certain minimum in amenities for job-satisfaction and self-fulfilment, for intellectual and political self-expression, and to ensure a certain amount of material security for their families. By definition, underdevelopment is a condition that falls short in guaranteeing the provision of all these opportunities to people. Skilled nationals of underdeveloped regions are typically those who have a choice in accepting the conditions surrounding living in underdevelopment or rejecting them in favour of greater comforts in the developed world. More and more, with the deteriorating economic and social circumstances in Africa, skilled Africans have been exercising their ability to chose against difficult conditions of living. Thus depending underdevelopment, has been the most basic cause of the worsening problem of brain drain affecting African economies. Therefore measures to find lasting solutions must be focussed on efforts to remove the factors that create underdevelopment. In this, the African countries should endeavour to formulate policies and strategies that would enable them to implement the Lagos Plan of Action, and so lay the basis for an inward-looking, self-reliant and self-sustaining development. They should also, as an immediate and a medium-term measure evolve programmes that would render their economies less vulnerable to external shocks and natural calamities. Food security and self-sufficiency should be a primary objective of agricultural development

policies and industrialization should aim at enhancing the internal integration of the various economic sectors. Institutions should be reoriented towards facilitating the attainment of the objectives of the Lagos Plan of Action and a new socio-political ethos must be inculcated among Africa's policy makers and economic managers.

Much of what is required, ought to be undertaken by Africans themselves, but the international community also has a vital role to play in creating the stage to enable African Governments to start along these new development directions: protectionist and inflationary policies should be reviewed with a view to giving African economies a breathing space in the world economic system; terms of trade for African commodities should aim at giving a fairer deal to Africa's already dispossessed masses; Western banking institutions and Governments should adopt measures that would ease Africa's debt burden considerably; and development financing assistance ought to be stepped up in order to enable African Governments make the requisite investments to strengthen their economic foundations.

It is only by improving the social, economic and political conditions within the African continent that the real conditions can be set for reversing the outflow of skilled manpower from African countries.

In more specific terms, and alongside the broader measures to attain rapid rates of socio-economic development within Africa, the following actions must be taken to curb the brain drain:

(i) Provision of more realistic incentives to skilled nationals

As has been noted earlier, existing incentives policies tend to favour the brain drain from African economies. Economists have argued that raising salary levels in dualistic African economies would distort wage structures, promote income and other inequalities, curtail investments in welfare programmes and create a host of internal socio-economic imbalances. However, one must regard the problem of loss of skills as one of loss of primary development inputs, in the same manner as the absence of capital would be seen as constituting of an essential commodity determines its price, then the cost of purchase of essential high level skills should not be a constraining factor in a situation where the economies involved pay a much higher price for the absence of those skills. The opportunity costs alone, justify instituting immediate measures to attract and retain high quality manpower by providing much greater monetary and other incentives packages to this category of skilled men and women.

Working conditions should also be regarded as part of the incentives packages that African countries must provide to curb the brain drain. Equipments and tools should be provided to allow the skilled to derive satisfaction in exercising their professions with ease and efficiency; intellectuals should be permitted the leverage to pursue study and research in enabling conditions, by providing to them the resources required to function with effectiveness.

All these require investments and capital outlays. Financial and economic conditions are at present so unfavourable, as to make it extremely difficult for African Governments to embark on these courses of action without the substantial support of the developed world. Development assistance policies for African countries should take into consideration ways and means of buttressing certain financial and economic sectors in a manner that would allow incentives to be increased to arrest or reverse the flow of the brain drain.

(ii) Strengthening of capabilities for within-region education and training

As has been argued above, education and training of Africans in the West, accounts for a good part of the brain drain from the continent. The large numbers of Africans that pursue studies abroad are compelled to do so as a result of the inadequacy in quantity and in quality, of facilities to study within the continent itself. Because of the relatively small numbers of places available for higher level education, selection of students is far more stringent than in other regions of the world. As a result, only exceptional students are provided opportunities for study within the continent. The rest, with high aptitudes and good potentials, have to look for opportunities for study abroad. Even for those who gain acceptance into third-level educational institutions the quality of instruction may be affected by inadequacy of instructional materials and educational resources, or the narrowness of the curriculum, thus creating the need for some to pursue their education in better conditions abroad.

In order to bring solutions to this problems, African Governments should strengthen the education and training sector by expanding opportunities for higher education and training, and by providing the resources required to improve the quality of instruction. Most Governments will be unable to undertake this on their own, therefore they should resort to a pooling of efforts and resources to expand educational and training services on a sub-regional and regional basis. ECA has promoted such a strategy for a number of years now, with the result that some forty such subregional and regional institutions have been created over the years. Western Governments and the international community should also favour this approach to solving the problem of education and training in Africa, by directing a greater percentage of their aid for human resources development, to strengthening subregional and regional education and training institutions.

National efforts also should be encouraged, to streamline curricula with local problems and realities and thus make education and training more relevant to the solution of African problems. The need for localization is further underscored by the weak capabilities existing for the production of teaching materials and equipment, and the heavy dependence of African countries on the developed world for the provision of these materials. The recent foreign exchange difficulties experienced by African countries have hit the education and training sector, in that the materials required for effective teaching and learning could not easily be purchased, thereby depressing the quality of instruction and adding yet another reason for Africans to choose to study abroad.

(iii) Restrictions on Migration

Governments may consider formulating policies aimed at restricting out-migration from Africa only in so far as those policies would not constitute an infringment on human rights. In any case, experience from many African countries which have restrictive emigration policies, proves that they do not work effectively. In some cases, they have been known to be counter-productive in the sense that their very existence makes emigration fashionable among professionals.

Restrictions on migration are therefore not the answer to the brain drain. Measures to curb it must be directed towards removing its causes not their effects, hence the need for policies and programmes that would make living and working in African countries worth the while.

(iv) The Joint ECA/ICM Return of Skills Programme for Africa

The Return of Skills Programme for Africa was developed jointly by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the International Committee for Migration. It was premised on the following:

(a) Vacancies in African countries and general skills shortages and exerting a strain on Africa's development,

(b) Most skilled Africans in Europe and America would, if presented with the opportunity, opt to work in Africa,

(c) Those who for various rasons would not wish to return to their countries of origin, would accept offers to return to another African country,

(d) Skills returned to the continent (not necessarily to the country of origin) constitute a net gain to the region's development,

(e) Developing a system for providing information on vacancies in Africa, to skilled Africans in the West, would interest a good number of the latter to return to Africa.

(f) Providing incentives to those who chose to return, will encourage them to stay on in Africa and would assist them in being reintegrated into African living.

The joint project was formally launched in March 1985.

Collaboration on project implementation between ECA and ICM involves the identification of vacancies in African countries by ECA, identification of suitably qualified Africans living in Western countries by ICM, and a joint effort to place these Africans in the vacancies identified.

To date, ECA has received more than two hundred and fifty requests for experts from Zaire, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Uganda, Niger, Ghana, Nigeria and Sudan. These were dispatched to ICM Headquarters for the possible matching with qualified Africans identified in Europe and the Americas. Through this process, some fifty Africans have had their candidatures submitted to African countries for placement.

Biographical sketches of another fifty Africans in the United States of America were also circulated to all African countries. Twenty-seven such candidates attracted the attention of seven institutions of higher learning in five English-speaking African countries.

As of now, there are thirty-six active cases involving candidates either being processed by African countries for eventual recruitment under the programme, or being cleared by ECA or ICM for submission to interested African Governments. Eight files have been closed, meaning that the candidates have either been placed or have opted out of the programme.

The project is, without doubt of great interest to African Governments, judging by their response to it. Third-level educational institutions have shown a particularly keen interest in it. The Second Conference of Vice Chancellors, Presidents and Rectors of Institutions of Higher Learning in Africa devoted a session to discussing how African educational institutions could best make use of the project facilities. The African Association for Training and Development also discussed the project at their fourth biennial conference.

Resources and research support facilities should be made available to the project in order to assist in the timely matching of vacancies in African countries with skills in Europe and North Africa. Governments of the EEC and the US could help considerably in increasing the impact of this project on efforts to reverse the brain drain.

5. Recommendations

(a) Because of the paucity of data and an inadequate understanding of the causes that bring about high rates of out-migration in African countries, it is recommended that the ECA, ICM and OAU be assisted to undertake a comprehensive study of international migration from Africa, its causes and its effects on African economies. Such a study should be supported by a study of high-level African migrants in Europe and North America with a view to establishing their numbers, their educational and skill profiles and the reasons for their unwillingness to return to Africa.

(b) Assistance should be extended to African Governments in order to enable them to withstand the adverse effects of certain global economic conditions such as the recession, inflation, high interest rates and the debt burden. These are conditions whose impact on fragile African economies act as an accelerator of the brain drain, and which should be attacked with a view to making life more bearable, and so attenuate the "push" effect on out-migration trends. Debt relief measures must be adopted by Governments of the developed world; and terms of trade should be improved with a view to increasing the export earnings of African countries in the world market. Protectionist policies should also be reviewed with a view to dampening their negative impact on African trade. Assistance for development should be stepped up, as should aid, to remove the causes and the effects of the African social and economic crisis.

(c) African Governments should institute measures necessary to provide adequate incentives packages to retain skilled and professional workers within their economies. These may include salary increases, substantial allocations for the purchase and regular maintenance of working tools and equipment, subsidies for housing, education, transportation etc. The present inadequacy of incentives to attract this category of professionals accounts, in large measure, for the high rate of outflow of skilled manpower.

(d) Capabilities for providing a susbtantially higher amount and wider range of educational and training facilities within the continent should be strengthened. This means that more third level educational institutions should be created, well staffed and equipped to respond to the growing educational and training needs emerging within the continent. The already tightened budgets of African Governments will certainly constitute a serious constraint on action in this regard, but with assistance from the developed countries and the international community at large, it should be easy for this recommendation to be implemented in the coming years. With greater capabilities for educating and training Africans within Africa, the need will be obviated for large numbers of Africans to seek education and training abroad, thus reducing the risk of a good number not returning to the continent with their acquired skills.

(e) African third-level educational institutions should be assisted in their uphill task to retain their teaching, research and administrative personnel. With the deteriorating economic conditions in African countries, third-level educational institutions have been the prime victims of public spending cutbacks. Allocations for teaching, research, publications and even welfare programmes have been reduced significantly in many African universities and other third-level educational institutions. As a result the staff turnover from these institutions has been extremely high in recent years. Governments of Western countries should assist in redressing this situation by chancelling aid towards supporting university research and teaching programmes as well as the procurement of instruments, equipment and instructional materials.

(f) The constriction of theAfrican economy in recent years has depressed the demand for labour in all economic sectors. Educated unemployment is on the increase and more and more, professional and skilled workers and becoming victims of this condition, thus leaving them no choice but to seek employment elsewhere. Job creation programmes should be formulated and implemented by African Governments. Western countries and the international community at large should assist with investments of the types that would invigorate production activities in the agricultural and industrial sectors of African economies, create jobs that would employ the growing numbers of Africa's professional and skilled workers, and so preempt the flight of skills from African economies.

(g) There already exist very commendable efforts by ICM to assist in the voluntary return of skilled Africans from Europe and North America. The joint ECA/ICM project which was launched in 1985 has assisted a number of African professionals to find jobs, not necessarily in their countries of origin, but all the same within the continent of Africa. African Governments themselves have shown a keen interest in participating in the project and have passed a number of resolutions in support of it. The Governments of the EEC and North America should increase their financial support of the project, and review their present terms of assistance with a view to taking into consideration the peculiarities of socio-economic conditions in African countries individually and collectively, in order to make the terms of acceptance to return more attractive to African professional migrants.

6. Conclusion

The brain drain is emerging as one of the most serious development problems facing African Governments and they have singly and collectively expressed concern over its intensification. By itself the brain drain constitutes a tremendous financial and economic loss to the African continent and contributes significantly to widening the gap between the rich and the poor countries.

Social, economic and political conditions in Africa claim a major part of the responsibility for this undesirable state of affairs. Therefore, for any meaningful and lasting solutions to be found to the problem, action should be directed towards social, economic and political improvements in Africa. This means that development efforts should be redoubled and strategies should aim at making real gains in socio-economic development.

More specifically, incentives systems should be reviewed with a view to providing more realistic levels of remuneration and emoluments and the working conditions in African countries should be made to promote the feeling of job-satisfaction and self-actualization.

Capacities and capabilities should be strengthened so as to ensure that production of goods and services becomes indigenized and that the development and operation of institutions emanates from within the continent. Educational services should be expanded and improved to obviate the need for large numbers of Africans to seek educational opportunities abroad.

Governments of the developed world and the international community at large ought to assist in the restructuring of things by evolving policies and programmes that would assist African countries in strengthening their economic base, develop their capabilities and create the conditions under which African skilled manpower would be inclined to stay and work in Africa.